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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA VIEWS SUMMIT OF AMERICAS AS CRUCIAL TO
POSITIVE U.S.-LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 241

[1](#)B. STATE 18528

Classified By: Ambassador Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: U.S. SOA Coordinator Ambassador Hector Morales received GOA assurances March 5 that Argentina was committed to a positive outcome in Trinidad and Tobago and would work closely with the USG to that end. Argentina's Summit Coordinator, Vice Foreign Minister Victorio Taccetti, emphasized that leaders' perceived responsiveness to the global economic crisis would shape media coverage of the SOA.

He therefore urged a short preamble to the Summit Declaration summarizing how the SOA would benefit common citizens in the region. He also plugged Argentina's desire to have a reference to finding a resolution to the Malvinas dispute in the Summit document. Argentine OAS Perm Rep Rodolfo Gil worried that without an interesting summit outcome, the press would focus on the dynamic between President Obama and Venezuelan President Chavez. Ambassador Morales emphasized that President Obama had indicated a clear intention to go to the Summit in order to signal a new engagement with the region, a desire to find alternative approaches to the issues affecting the region, but without preconceived U.S. prescriptions for the region. In a separate meeting, Argentine entrepreneur Ernesto Gutierrez, President of the II Hemispheric Private Sector Forum, shared concerns about GOTT commitment to their pre-Summit event and their ability to compete for participation with the concurrent World Economic Forum meeting in Rio de Janeiro; he requested that the President or a senior USG official agree to participate in some way with the private sector gathering.
End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS and Summit of the Americas Coordinator Ambassador Hector Morales visited Argentina for March 5 meetings to coordinate with the GOA on the April 17 to 19 Fifth Summit of the Americas (SOA). The central meeting in the program was at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Argentine Summit Coordinator and Vice Foreign Minister Victorio Taccetti. Taccetti was accompanied by Argentine Permanent Representative to the OAS Rodolfo Gil, Under Secretary for Latin American Affairs Agustin Colombo-Sierra, Director General for Latin American Policy Noemi Gomez and Director for Regional Affairs Marcelo Valle Fonrouge. DCM and Poloff (notetaker) participated with Ambassador Morales.

[1](#)3. (U) In addition, Ambassador Morales met with Ernesto Gutierrez, President of Second Hemispheric Private Sector Forum (to be held April 15-16, immediately before the Summit) and with Under Secretary for Electric Energy Jose Luis Beuret (paras 10-13). Ambassador Morales conducted a roundtable on the Summit of the Americas with five print journalists after the meetings (para 14-15).

14. (SBU) VFM Taccetti cordially received Ambassador Morales with a large team of MFA officials involved in the Summit process. He described the SOA as important to Argentina, particularly as a defining moment in the Obama Administration's relationship with the hemisphere -- and with Argentina. "We are anxious to demonstrate the value of good U.S. relations with the region," he said, adding that the SOA needed to "have a good outcome."

15. (SBU) Ambassador Morales responded that the USG shared the commitment to a positive meeting and noted that the timing of the event, within the first 90 days of President Obama's term, was fortuitous. Morales also emphasized that President Obama was committed to listening to the views and concerns of his fellow leaders and that the U.S. was not preparing a series of initiatives precisely because it did not want to risk being directive rather than responsive.

16. (C) Taccetti voiced a concern that the Summit needed to be perceived as responsive to the economic crisis in a way that made it clear leaders were not seeking an exit from economic turmoil "at the expense of the poor." He shared his appreciation over WHA A/S Shannon's continued emphasis on "social inclusion" as a U.S. objective during their recent meeting in Washington (ref B). The draft Summit Declaration, Taccetti said, was too long. If it could not be radically shortened, he said, then a tightly worded "chapeau" or preamble would be critical. Argentine OAS Permrep Gil shared a concern that without a strong and accessible statement,

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press coverage of the Summit might easily drift toward reporting on the dynamic between President Obama and Venezuelan President Chavez. Such an outcome, he said, "might be good for Chavez, but it would not be good for the rest of the region." It is worth noting that Taccetti disagreed with Gil's latter observation. Under Secretary Colombo Sierra suggested that the SOA, coming just 15 days after the G-20 meeting in London, would need to echo and amplify substantive responses to the economic crisis.

17. (C) VFM Taccetti argued that Argentina was a crucial country in the effort to shape a positive Summit outcome, both as a participant in the informal "friends" group (with Brazil and with past hosts Canada, Chile, Mexico and the United States) but also as a big and influential country in the region. "Our role is key," he said. Argentina had influence because of its relatively large size, he said, but unlike much larger Brazil, it did not generate resistance due to fears of its potential dominance. Argentina, Taccetti suggested, could influence the approach other countries took to the Summit.

18. (C) At the meeting's conclusion, Taccetti and his team also raised their desire to have the Summit Declaration mention their dispute with the United Kingdom over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands. Argentina did not expect a formal backing for its claim, but rather an acknowledgment of a dispute between a Summit member and another country, written in a way to favor peaceful dialogue. This, he emphasized, was a "policy of state," not just of the current government.

Details of the Declaration

19. (SBU) Prior to departing the meeting, Taccetti emphasized again the importance of a short, substantive "chapeau" to the Summit Declaration. He encouraged the designation of perhaps just three countries from the six friends to take the pen and then to communicate their proposals to the rest of the friends and to the host about their proposals. After

Taccetti departed, Ambassador Gil and much of the Argentine delegation engaged in a constructive exchange with Ambassador Morales over language in the Declaration.

Energy at the Summit

¶10. (SBU) Due to travel by the GOA's Secretary of Energy Daniel Cameron, Ambassador Morales met with Under Secretary Jose Luis Beuret on March 5 to discuss the importance of energy security issues within the Summit process (ref A describes Ambassador Wayne's earlier conversation with Cameron on Summit themes). Morales described the many considerations of the USG in shaping an initiative in this area, including a search for areas in common with the region, a focus on sustainable development and the environment, an emphasis on renewables, and links to social concerns and the broad human prosperity agenda of the region.

¶11. (SBU) Beuret voiced appreciation for the opportunity to provide input and shared his government's enthusiasm for U.S. engagement in the area -- despite what he described as some public concerns in the past that the USG was simply angling to control Argentine resources. Beuret touched on challenges in Argentina to the development of renewable energy despite the country's huge potential for wind and solar power. Some were regulatory or related to Argentina's current policies of subsidizing wholesale and retail prices of conventionally generated electricity, but the country also needs access to international capital to finance the high costs of adding new electricity generation capacity to the national grid. Beuret noted that Argentina had yet to widely embrace a culture of energy conservation, and that good passive solar design or adequate insulation was mostly absent in Argentine construction. Education and technical assistance in conservation might be another area for positive technical assistance and education within the Americas.

The Private Sector's Summit Struggles

¶12. (SBU) Morales met with Ernesto Gutierrez, president of the umbrella "Private Sector of the Americas" organization, which is hosting the II Hemispheric Private Sector Forum immediately before the Fifth SOA. The meeting with Gutierrez took place at the headquarters of "Aeropuertos 2000," the private operator of Argentina's principal airports that

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Gutierrez heads.

¶13. (SBU) Gutierrez and his aide Jorge Lukowski described challenges in getting the government of Trinidad and Tobago to focus on and support their own private sector event. The logistic problems of structuring a large private sector gathering in this island nation had been compounded then by competition from a regional World Economic Forum meeting to take place in Rio de Janeiro at the same time. Gutierrez requested USG assistance in working toward a positive private sector meeting, particularly having President Obama or a senior Cabinet official participate at an event associated with the meetings, perhaps a reception on April 16. Consultation with GOA makes Positive News

¶14. (U) At Embassy's request, Ambassador Morales made himself available at the close of his visit for a roundtable discussion with print media. Three newspapers ("La Nacion," "Perfil," and "Cronista") as well as two wire-services (state-owned Telam and private Noticias Argentinas) attended. The resulting positive coverage included three wire stories, placements in business-financial "El Cronista," left-of-center "Pagina 12," "Perfil," and La Plata daily "El Dia," along with a positive opinion piece by Noticias Argentinas political editor Gabrile Profitti.

¶15. (U) In addition to details of Ambassador Morales's regional consultations and preparations for the Fifth SOA, stories gave emphasis to Morales's points about the importance of the Summit as an opportunity to strengthen U.S. ties to the region under the new U.S. Administration. Ambassador Morales was quoted referring to U.S.-Argentine relations as important and strong. The press noted that Ambassador Morales had said the global economic crisis would be an important topic of discussion at the Summit.

Comment: A New Point of Departure for Argentina

¶16. (C) After the events at Mar de Plata in 2005, the GOA's commitment to working with the U.S. toward a productive and positive Summit in Port of Spain is itself newsworthy. At Taccetti's level, there is clearly a recognition that Argentina needs to play a constructive role in the pre-Summit process. The MFA clearly welcomed the opportunity to discuss details of the Declaration and the Summit process. The collaborative preparatory work on the Summit between Ambassador Morales and Argentine interlocutors, and the Ambassador's willingness to come to Buenos Aires to continue the dialogue, is benefiting our bilateral relationship.

¶17. (U) This message was cleared by Ambassador Morales.
WAYNE